

How much does ambulance service cost?

Most of the costs of ambulance services in Ontario are covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. The average cost to the province per trip is about \$80, but an insured resident pays only a nominal charge for each ambulance trip, when medically required. A bill for this service will be received from the hospital. For authorized air ambulance service, an insured resident pays \$25. Without insurance, the person is liable for the full rates applicable for air service.

How to call an ambulance

- 1) Be sure that an ambulance is really needed. Unnecessary calls for ambulances reduce the efficiency of the system. Use a private car or taxi if the injury is minor.
- 2) For greater efficiency, phone the local dispatcher directly. Have the number by your phone. You can find it in the white pages of your phone book under "Ambulance Services". If you don't know, or can't find the number, dial "0" and ask the operator for "Zenith Ninety-thousand." She will connect you immediately with an ambulance dispatcher.
- 3) Give the dispatcher exact information about the address where you want an ambulance. He will repeat it back to you. Be sure it is correct. An accurate description of the location, with landmarks, will assist the driver and save time.
- 4) Tell the dispatcher what seems to be wrong with the victim so the attendant will know what equipment to take from his ambulance to the patient when he arrives. This is particularly important when he can't get his ambulance near the victim—in a high-rise apartment building, for example.

What to do before the ambulance arrives

However efficient the ambulance service, survival of a victim could depend on your prompt action in the minutes before the ambulance arrives. The application of artificial respiration is one example.

Consult the dispatcher. He may be able to provide you with life-saving information.

What to do when the ambulance arrives

- Tell the ambulance crew if you have information about the patient and the illness or accident. Provide it when requested.
- Tell the crew if you are qualified to help, and do so as and when requested. Help by keeping bystanders clear of the area, and calm.
- Do not try to help lift the stretcher, unless requested.

Practice preventive first aid

Learn what to do, and what not to do, in an emergency, by enrolling in a first aid course. The Ambulance Services Branch of the Ministry of Health can show informative films or you can arrange for courses in your area with St. John Ambulance or the Canadian Red Cross Society. Contact:

Ambulance Services Branch
Ontario Ministry of Health
7 Overlea Blvd.
Toronto, Ontario M4H 1A8

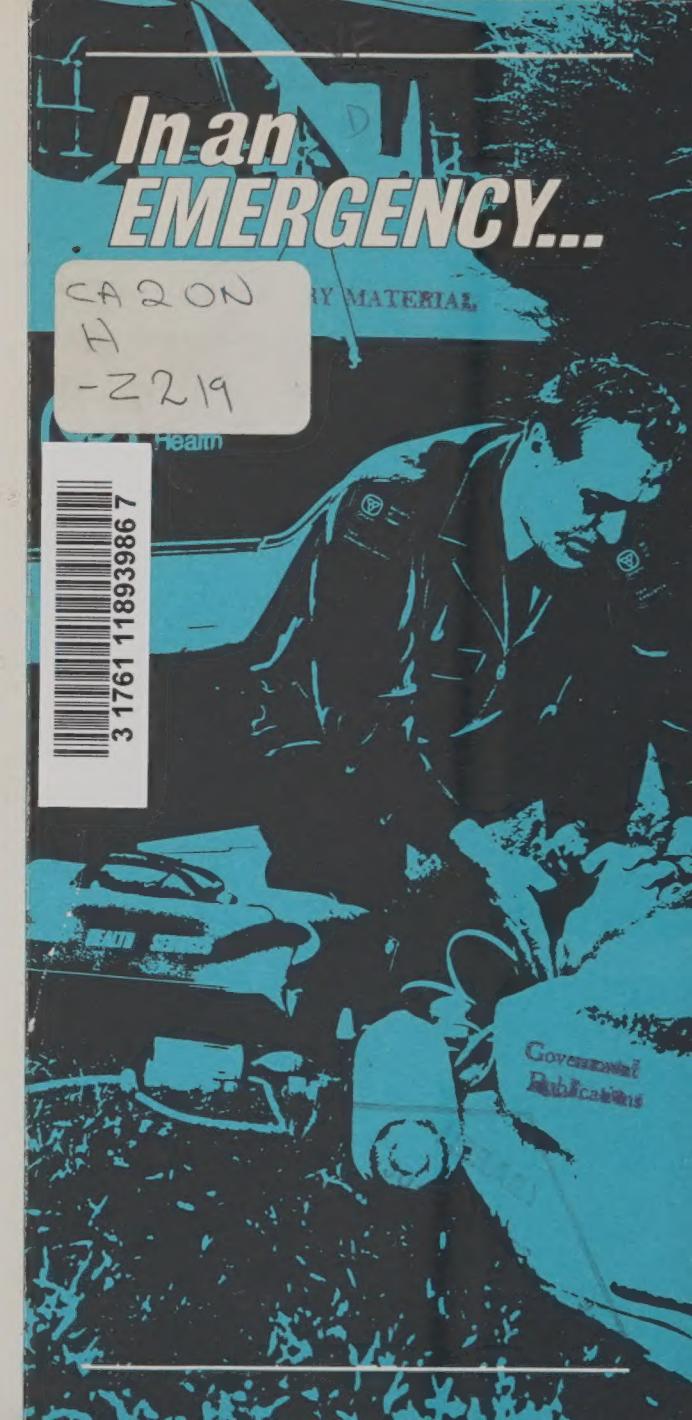


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In an emergency

An injury in a factory, a fall at home, the collapse of a heart victim in an office... suddenly someone needs immediate medical attention.

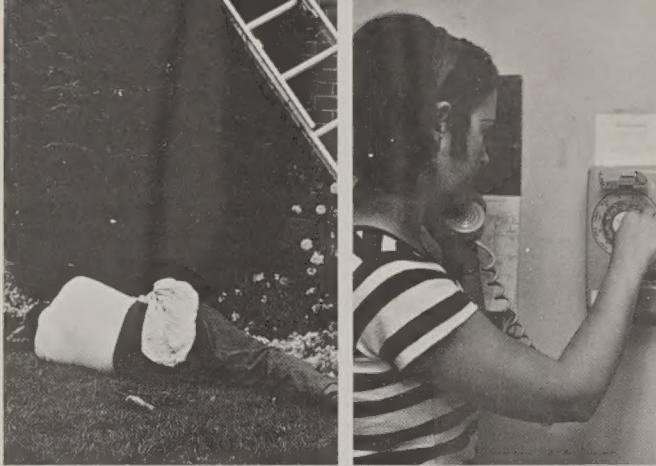
Anyone at the scene needs only to call a local ambulance dispatch service for prompt, efficient assistance. At a control centre, a radio dispatcher takes information about the casualty and the address to which the ambulance must go. He may even instruct the caller at the scene in some simple life-saving techniques that will help the victim until the ambulance arrives. A nearby ambulance is called into action and arrives on the scene within minutes.

But a modern ambulance is *not* just a fast vehicle with a siren and flashing lights, racing a victim to the hospital. It's a vehicle specially designed and staffed to give the *right* kind of emergency care at the scene and on the way to hospital. With a full range of modern medical equipment—oxygen tanks, splinting devices, ventilation and suction apparatus—and men trained to use it, the ambulance acts as a kind of small emergency ward on wheels, providing vital care for patients *before* they reach the hospital.

Know-how important

Ambulance drivers and attendants are skilled professionals. They have the experience and know-how to make important decisions about the best way of rescuing, treating and handling a victim. If a victim is badly injured, they will try to stabilize his bodily condition right at the casualty scene, using all the life support equipment available to them. They position him properly, carry him to the ambulance, and drive him to the hospital as carefully as possible. This is important. They must make sure that no further damage is done to him through bumps and jolts on the road. In most situations, a fast ambulance ride may be the worst possible thing for a patient.

Through his two-way radio, the driver receives information from the dispatcher about which area hospital can handle the patient best. If necessary, the driver will talk through a radio-phone connection to the doctor on duty at the emergency ward



about the patient's condition. This way, the staff at the hospital will be prepared when the victim arrives.

Well trained

Ambulance men are important members of the whole emergency health care system. Their training is expanding all the time to include new duties and responsibilities. Some ambulance attendants have taken a year-long paramedic training course during which they have received experience in emergency departments, operating rooms and coronary care units. Some community colleges have also started courses to train new ambulance attendants in all aspects of emergency care.

An effective expanding service

- Since 1968, all ambulances in Ontario have been under the control of the provincial government. The government-owned fleet now numbers almost 500 of the 550 licensed in the province. These fully equipped emergency vehicles cost about \$11,000 each.
- An ultra-modern radio communications and dispatch system now covers the entire province and handles a half million phone calls a year. There are more than 150 interlinking dispatch centres for quick, efficient service.
- Ambulance service has expanded greatly throughout northern Ontario, including the use of air service for isolated areas.
- Ambulances are used more and more for non-emergency purposes. Ambulances are involved in transferring patients from one hospital to another, when the patient requires the equivalent of hospital care en route. Ambulances also carry patients from hospital to home, so they can benefit from the Home Care Plan.
- The Ontario ambulance service has been called the best in North America. Consultants and experts from around the world have come to study its operations.